

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rhode Island public libraries receive \$386,540 from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for public access computer equipment and software.

Providence, RI - The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has awarded \$386,540 to 23 Rhode Island public libraries to spend on public access computers, software and training in the next year as part of the foundation's U.S. Library Program, State Partnership Program with the RI Office of Library and Information Services. The public access computers will give low-income patrons access to computers, the Internet and technical training.

Rhode Island is the final state to receive awards for this program which addresses the issue of the "digital divide". Public libraries in communities with 10% or more of their population living below the poverty level were invited to apply for the grants. While most Rhode Island libraries currently provide some public access to the Internet, some have out-of-date equipment or insufficient equipment for patron needs. The grant will help Rhode Island libraries build bridges across the "digital divide" that affects both children and adults. Recent studies show that 'computer literacy' is increasingly important to success at school and in work.

The award packages were mailed on November 26th to the Rhode Island libraries whose applications were accepted. Computers and software will be purchased and installed by the end of May 2003.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has committed \$250 million to public libraries nationwide to give all people access to digital information. By the end of 2003, it expects to have provided 40,000 computers to nearly 10,000 libraries in all 50 states.

The Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Services, Library Programs (<http://www.ori.state.ri.us>) provides leadership, grants and other assistance to improve local library service for all Rhode Islanders.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (<http://www.gatesfoundation.org>) is dedicated to improving people's lives by sharing advances in health and learning with the global community. Led by Bill Gates' father, William H. Gates, Sr., and Patty Stonesifer, the Seattle-based foundation has an endowment of approximately \$24 billion.

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NOTE: A list of libraries that received Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation U.S. Library Program grants follows.

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation U.S. Library Program
Rhode Island Public Library Grant Recipients – 2002

Central Falls Free Public Library
Cranston Public Library, Arlington Reading Room
East Greenwich Free Library
East Providence Public Library
 Riverside Branch
Jamestown Philomenian Library
Middletown Public Library
Narragansett Public Library
Newport Public Library
Pawtucket Public Library
Providence Public Library
 Fox Point Branch
 Knight Memorial Library
 Mount Pleasant Branch
 Olneyville Branch
 Rochambeau Branch
 Smith Hill Branch
 South Providence Branch
 Wanskuck Branch
 Washington Park Branch
West Warwick Public Library
Woonsocket Harris Public Library
 Fairmount Branch